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How Reservation for Backward Classes

Words: 510, Characters: 3213 **LEVEL: STANDARD**

Why did the independent Indian state not abolish caste? The answer lies in the 78
extension of reservation to another category backward classes (now OBCS), which is 161
to be read as backward castes as B.R. Ambedkar himself explained. Unbeknownst to 242
most, caste was skillfully transplanted from the decaying soil of feudalism into the 327
fertile ground of the modern Constitution, revived and legitimised in the garb of social 416
justice. It was transformed from a moral anomaly into a criterion of eligibility for 501
state-sponsored justice. This was not an inadvertent error. The new ruling classes did 588
not want to lose such a potent weapon as caste to manipulate people. This 662
legal-constitutional revalidation of caste was done in the name of social justice. It 748
implicitly accepted caste as foundational to both grievance and redress, thereby 829
naturalising its existence in the modern state. The Constitution became a 903
'casteographic' document that deployed caste not as an object to be annihilated, but 988
as the basis for redistribution, making its hold stronger in the political imagination. 1076
The Indian Constitution, while ostensibly a blueprint for a democratic, egalitarian 1160
republic, effectively terminated the radical discourse of caste annihilation by recoding 1249
caste as a legitimate instrument of social policy. The vision articulated by Ambedkar 1335
in his 1936 treatise, Annihilation of Caste a call to abolish caste by dismantling its 1422
religious and social foundations subordinated to the pragmatic logic of 1494
state-administered justice via castebased reservation. Was Rather than confronting 1577
caste as an ideological problem to be eradicated, the Constitution transformed it into 1664
a bureaucratic and legal category, weaving it into the very fabric of governance. This 1751
institutionalisation of caste under the rubric of social justice came without a sunset 1838
clause: no timeline, metric of success, or mechanism for dismantling the very 1916
identities it mobilised for redress. Instead of treating reservations as temporary 1999
correctives within a wider project of universal advancement, the Indian state has 2081
normalised them as perpetual fixtures, cementing caste as a permanent axis of 2159
identity and state action. In fact, while resigning as law minister from the Nehru 2242
cabinet in 1951, he offered this as one of the reasons in his statement to the press: 'I 2331
was very sorry that the Constitution did not embody any safeguards for the backward 2415
classes. It was left to be done by the executive government on the basis of the 2495
recommendation of a commission to be appointed by the president. More than a year 2577
has elapsed since we passed the Constitution. But the government has not even 2655
thought of appointing the commission.' Many of his statements on the Constitution 2737
must be taken with a pinch of salt, especially in light of his remark in the Rajya Sabha, 2827

'People always keep on saying to me: 'Oh, you are the maker of the Constitution.' My 2912
answer is, I was a hack. What I was asked to do, I did much against my will. This 2994
effectively amounted to a disowning of the Constitution itself. His support for 3074
reservations for backward classes (BCs) appeared more a matter of political 3150
expediency than conviction. Given that BCs constitute the most 3213